

AZ-ZARNŪJĪ

Instruction of the Student
The Method of Learning

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Ta'lim al-Muta'allim—Ṭarīq
at-Ta'allum

*Instruction of the Student:
The Method of Learning*

Translated, with an Introduction, by

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PREFACE

Some years ago, while engaged in class-work at the Iranian Institute in New York, the authors realized the desirability of studying a representative of Arabic educational thought from the combined viewpoints of the Islamist and the psychologist. During their work on az-Zarnūjī's treatise, which was unduly protracted by more immediate professional obligations, their conviction deepened that it was only through collaboration of specialists that the more remote aspects of an alien civilization could be properly explored. More important still, only such collaboration was likely ever to make the Western social or natural scientist aware of the inspiration to be gained by him from the treatment of his field in a civilization not his own. What the authors attempted in a comparatively small segment of but one branch of research should be taken up by others on a larger scale and collaboration expanded to cover every social and natural science.

The authors wish to thank Mrs. William H. Moore for making possible publication of the present study. It is above all as an expression of confidence in the value of their approach that they appreciate Mrs. Moore's generous help in bringing the ideas of the medieval Arab educator to the attention of his colleagues in the modern West.

G. V. G.
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INTRODUCTION

I. Az-Zarnūjī's Contribution to the Problem of Learning

Az-Zarnūjī¹ was a Mohammedan who lived in the Middle East toward the end of the 12th and beginning of the 13th century A.D. He was one of perhaps two dozen Islamic writers who discussed problems of education and learning during medieval times.² What az-Zarnūjī had to say was not revolutionary nor world-shaking; he was rather a collector and synthesizer of the ideas of scholars and sages who had preceded him.³ He was also a traditionalist since he looked for guidance along the pathways of the ancients and pursued the injunctions of the Koran.

1. Nothing is known of Burhān ad-Dīn az-Zarnūjī's life beyond what may be inferred from his writings of which the present treatise is the most widely renowned and the only one printed. Az-Zarnūjī was a jurisprudent of the Ḥanafite school with wide associations in Northeastern Persia (Khorasan) and Transoxiana. The printings of the *Ta'lim al-muta'allim—farīq at-ta'allum* are listed by C. Brockelmann, *Geschichte der arabischen Literatur* (Weimar and Berlin, 1898-1902; Supplement: Leiden, 1937-1940), I, 462 (Suppl., I, 837). M. Plessner, *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (Leiden, 1913-1934), IV, 1218, has put together the few indications available as to az-Zarnūjī's date. The popularity of the *Ta'lim* is attested by the fact that three commentaries were written during the 16th century.

This translation of the *Ta'lim*, the first into a modern western language, is based on the prints: Cairo, Maḥmūdiyya, n.d., 32 pp., and Leipsic, Baumgaertner, 1838, 48 pp., both disfigured by a number of misprints and errors. Divergencies in the two editions are marked, Maḥ. referring to the Maḥmūdiyya, Leip. to the Leipsic print.

2. For an abstract of the contributions of these writers see Khalil A. Totah, *The Contribution of the Arabs to Education* (N. Y., 1926), pp. 67-76. Material on mediaeval education supplementary to that of Totah can be found in Mohammed Abdul Mu'id Khan's *The Muslim Theories of Education During the Middle Ages*, Islamic Culture, XVIII (1944), pp. 418-433.

3. The similarity of az-Zarnūjī's teaching with the views set forth by al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā'*, Bk. I, Ch. 5 (I, 48-58), is striking. Al-Ghazālī excels az-Zarnūjī by eliminating all prelogical matter and by closer coordination of moral principle, scientific outlook, and instructional technique. It may be deserving of note that never once in the *Ta'lim* does az-Zarnūjī refer to the *Iḥyā'* which antedates it almost exactly by one century.

In studying his little educational treatise on *The Instruction of the Student—The Method of Learning*, which we have translated into English for the first time, we find az-Zarnūjī interesting reading not only from the point of view of ethnology and culture history but from that of education and psychology as well. It is chiefly his contribution to the problem of the learning process that shall concern us here.

Az-Zarnūjī had a very real purpose in writing his book (in the year 1203). He saw about him many students struggling for an education and for the attainment of knowledge, but falling short of their aim, whether this aim was "modest or splendid." According to him, these students did not succeed in their goal because they were not cognizant of the right methods of learning, or if they were, they did not abide by them but floundered around and wasted time. Therefore, az-Zarnūjī decided to explain to students a method of study which he had read about and heard from his own teachers.

The book is short. It is divided into thirteen sections or chapters, which are entitled as follows:

1. On the nature and merit of knowledge and learning.
2. On the purpose of study.
3. On the choosing of the subject matter of learning, the teachers, one's fellow students and one's permanent affiliation.
4. On respecting knowledge and those who possess it.
5. On industriousness, perseverance and assiduity (in the pursuit of learning).
6. On the beginning of study, its amount and its organization.
7. On placing one's faith in God.
8. On the time for the acquisition of knowledge.
9. On helpfulness and good advice.
10. On the means useful to the attainment of knowledge.
11. On abstinence from evil during the pursuit of learning.
12. What creates memory and what brings about forgetfulness.
13. Which things bring about and which prevent earning a livelihood, and which things augment or diminish the years of one's life.

Some of the chapters (i.e., 2, 7, 9, 13) are heavily weighted with the rites, duties and prescriptions of the Mohammedan faith and hence bear little interest for our present discussion. Other chapters (i.e., 3, 6, 10, 12) concentrate markedly on the topic of the means of acquiring an education, means that are psychological rather than religious or moral in their implications. In other chapters the scales are more or less evenly balanced between prelogical and logical ideas concerning modes of learning and thinking. We shall attempt to present a picture of the ideas set forth by az-Zarnūjī, drawing more heavily for our material from the sections dealing with the rational techniques for obtaining knowledge.

According to az-Zarnūjī, who here voices the consensus of the faithful, learning, or the acquisition of knowledge, is incumbent on every Moslem, man or woman. It is the one form of mental activity that man alone possesses. Animals can feel and perceive their environment but they are unable to attain knowledge.⁴ By this, az-Zarnūjī means learning through the medium of verbal symbols which are conceptualized and comprehended. He does not refer to the types of learning known in the present day as the acquisition of motor habits or reflex conditioning.

We shall divide the topic of the attainment of knowledge into the following headings: the curriculum and the subject matter to be studied, the choice of setting and teacher, the time for studying, the manner of study, including the psychological functions involved, and finally the dynamic and social aspects of learning.

A. The Curriculum and the Subject Matter

Jurisprudence, medicine and commenting on these disciplines are offered as the sum total of the fields of knowledge to be investigated by the scholar. Other disciplines such as the study of astronomy are strictly forbidden, with the exception of determining the time for prayers, since this subject tends to lead its student away from orthodox doctrine. Jurisprudence in all

4. Cf. Bacon (*Advancement of Learning*, Bk. I), who characterizes as a "vulgar argument" in favor of knowledge the observation that "by learning man excelleth man in that where man excelleth beasts."

its ramifications was to be the topic par excellence; legal knowledge, as az-Zarnūjī notes, affects a person on all occasions just as does a basic need, such as food.⁵ No one can dispense with it, at least no one who seeks to become a learned man. The study of medicine is more like a minor subject in the curriculum, since it is the type of knowledge that affects a person only on certain occasions; when he is ill and incapacitated. According to Islamic thinking, as reflected by az-Zarnūjī, medicine dealt with accidental or secondary causes and for this reason it was to be treated as a topic subservient to jurisprudence which is itself a theological discipline. A third possible field, or rather approach to study was that of the comments of the sages on the fine points of judicial and medical knowledge. Az-Zarnūjī stated that all students would not want to investigate these comments, but they were free to do so if they so desired.

Within this framework of study of jurisprudence, medicine, and comments on knowledge the student could select that branch of knowledge most beneficial to himself. By beneficial, az-Zarnūjī had cognizance of the preparedness of the student, his readiness to absorb new material by awareness and understanding rather than by blind faith in authority. In another passage az-Zarnūjī suggests that perhaps the teacher, after he gets to know a student, can give the best educational guidance. The teacher will ultimately know what is best for each person and suitable to his nature.⁶ Az-Zarnūjī also suggests that the student should not overlearn. He speaks briefly about how each one should study enough to fulfill his "station" or job successfully; if a man is a tradesman he should attain sufficient knowledge to become proficient in his business.⁷ The student was also advised to pursue ancient before new topics since he should not cut himself loose from tradition.⁸ If he did break away and "go modern" he would end up by becoming involved in innumerable disputes where no decision could be reached since there was no authority to back up one point of view or another.

B. Choice of Setting and Teacher

Peregrination in the pursuit of knowledge has been the char-

5. Transl., p. 23.

6. Transl., p. 36.

7. Transl., p. 21.

8. Transl., p. 28.

acteristic pattern of behavior for the student of higher education in all the more civilized cultures of the Occident and Orient both in historical and current times. Az-Zarnūjī admonished the student to travel to a center of learning, which in those days was not so much represented by a university but by scholars to whom students flocked from different parts of the Islamic world. Before starting his travels, however, the prospective student was to seek advice and obtain guidance concerning the individual with whom he should pursue his course of study. There was no question of going where one's father went, or going to school for social advancement or recreational facilities. It was a matter of choosing a teacher who would present a branch of jurisprudence or medicine in which the student desired education. In making a choice of a teacher, emphasis was laid on selecting the most learned, pious and venerable man, one who did not break from tradition.⁹ Abū Ḥanīfa^{9a} chose Hammād b. abī Sulaimān^{9b} after due deliberation because he said that he found him venerable, with serious mien, gentle and patient. "With him," he added, "I was on safe ground and I grew."¹⁰

Extreme emphasis was laid on seeking advice, not only in choosing a teacher but in all matters pertaining to learning: where to go, what to learn, what to do in given situations. The *Koran* is used as precedent here, for Muḥammad himself sought advice from his friends in all affairs even on domestic matters.¹¹ Ja'far aṣ-Ṣādiq¹² pointed out that since the quest for knowledge was among the most difficult tasks to do, seeking advice was both important and necessary.¹³ 'Alī¹⁴ stated that no man ever perished from seeking advice. In fact, seeking advice was considered as essential an aspect of human conduct as was forming intelligent judgments. Az-Zarnūjī quotes an adage that reads:

A man and half a man and nothing. A man is he who is intelligent in his judgment and consults, a half man is one

9. Transl., p. 28.

9a. See footnote 9 of translation.

9b. See footnote 21 of translation.

10. Transl., pp. 28-29.

11. Transl., p. 29.

12. Ja'far aṣ-Ṣādiq, the 6th of the ṣūfī imāms, d. 765 A. D.

13. Transl., p. 29.

14. 'Alī b. abī Ṭalib, the 4th caliph, 656-661 A.D.

who is intelligent in his judgment but does not seek advice or seeks advice but is not intelligent, and one who is nothing is he who is not intelligent and does not seek advice.¹⁵

If the student lived far from a center of learning he was to travel to a large city but when he got there he was not to hasten hither and thither first to one master then to another. A snap judgment on a teacher would be inadvisable since the student might find later that he did not care for the rationale of teaching of the professor to whom he had gone in haste. Rather the student was to settle down for a couple of months of patient meditation and counseling for the choice of a teacher. Apparently, the idea behind this careful selection was to avoid a waste of time both for the student and the teacher. Also it injured the teacher's reputation for a student to leave him before his discipline had been given fair trial.

On the other hand, after a choice was made, the student was to remain with the teacher long enough to perfect his learning of the subject matter; he should not skip off to another teacher with some half digested knowledge in his head. The student should show perseverance and patience. Constant change was considered disturbing to a man's *modus vivendi* and adjustment and a dreadful time consumer.

After having carefully chosen a teacher, the pupil was no longer to judge him critically. On the contrary, this master was to be greatly honored and treated with the highest respect. The pupil was never to walk in front of the teacher, sit in his place or speak without permission. The pupil was to prepare the food for the teacher, never eat with him, and also wash the teacher's feet. The pupils were to sit in a semi-circle at a short distance from the teacher. They were to respect the professor's children and stand up if these children came into their presence.

There were other considerations bearing on more mundane interests; the teacher was not only to be revered, he was to be

15. Transl., p. 29. Hesiod in *Works and Days*, ll. 293-297, remarks in the same vein: "Best of all is the man who considers everything himself and sees what is going to be right in the end. Good, too, is he who obeys another man who says what is good. But the man who neither understands for himself nor takes another's advice to heart, he is a useless fellow." (Quoted in *Paideia* of W. Jaeger [N.Y., 1939-1944], Vol. I, p. 71.)

paid as well, since he could not subsist on veneration alone. Also, he was not to be asked any questions or bothered if he was weary. The pupil was to learn not to intrude at the wrong time. A final technique for handling the teacher which has psychological rather than religious implications was that of flattering him. While Islam condemns flattery in general as base and an evil practice, it was condoned in the quest for knowledge. In order to profit from the teacher and attain information from him it was necessary to praise him.¹⁶

C. The Time for Study

An individual seeking to attain knowledge was to do so at all times and to do so from the cradle to the grave. There was to be no point at which adulthood was reached and the student stopped learning and discussing intellectual problems so as to attend merely to the plain business of practical living. There was to be no old age retirement system for the scholar. One elderly scholar was so busy considering a significant problem, that of freeing slaves, that he was not aware of the exact hour of his death.¹⁷

But in addition to this general picture of continued and unceasing devotion to the acquisition of knowledge, there was emphasis on special periods in life and particular times for study. The attainment of knowledge was to be pursued more emphatically in the early years of adolescence, at the time when the student was both old and young enough to absorb a great deal of learning. "Make use of the days of early youth for verily the period of youth does not remain with you."¹⁸

Burning the midnight oil has been the pattern of behavior for students in various climes and periods of history. The Arabs laid great stress on the efficacy of studying at night. The sayings about keeping a vigil at night are perhaps as numerous as any throughout the text. Night was to be taken as the means to attain the goal of knowledge as the camel was used to reach a geographical destination. But again there was a more specified stipulation as to the time of night best for study; this time was

16. Transl., pp. 36, 63. It was also not blameworthy to praise one's fellow students if they could be helpful.

17. Transl., p. 57.

18. Transl., p. 40.

the period of dusk and the hour of dawn. But even here the student was not to be fanatic about night study so that he became exhausted and cadaverous. He was to use moderation in his nightly allotments of study so that he did not become so debilitated as to reduce his ability to acquire knowledge. The Prophet said: "Your mind is your riding beast, so use it with moderation."¹⁹

D. Techniques for Learning and Manner of Study

Those of us less familiar with Islamic education have probably had a picture of the Arab student learning the Koran by heart hour after hour, by a repetitive and laborious method of literal memorial recall. It is true that children were expected to memorize the Koran and that after committing definite sections to memory they were honored by parades through the streets.²⁰ But a student who was seeking higher education was to go far beyond sheer rote memory. He was in the first place to understand what he was studying. He was to start with subject matter readily understood. He was advised to study a few subjects of broad scope and material met with quite frequently so that he could not only retain what he learned but understand it. This material he would find less fatiguing than that which was obscure and of more specialized content. We see here the pursuing of general introductory before advanced and specialized courses. The psychological function of understanding was considered so superior to that of parrot-like recall that one saying had it that understanding even two letters of the alphabet was better than recalling two "loads" of books.²¹

When he understood his material, the student was then told to learn it so he could later recall the subject of study. At this point the technique of repetition was to be brought into play. Az-Zarnūjī quoting from a variety of sources had a great deal to say about repetition. He spoke of the amount to be repeated at any one time and of spaced learning as well. One suggestion was that the student should learn whatever he could remember after two repetitions of the material.²² Each day he was to in-

19. Transl., p. 40.

20. Al-Iṣfahānī, *Aghānī* (Bulāq, 1285), Vol. XVIII, p. 101. The incident here recorded occurred in the 9th century A.D.

21. Transl., p. 47.

22. Transl., p. 46.

crease his learning by one word so that he could still memorize after two repetitions. On the other hand, if the student planned to learn material initially that required ten repetitions before memorial recall was perfected, he could do so. He could set himself a higher goal without too great effort and form a habit of a somewhat longer quantity of material to be acquired. Spaced learning was advised in the following manner: repeat the lesson of yesterday five times, that of the day before three times, the day before that, two times, and so forth. In this way the memory function is stimulated. But in the midst of these rules and regulations we find room for the individual pace-maker. In one passage the student is told to count and measure for himself the amount of repetition he needs.²³ The individual cannot function at his best until he finds out the right amount of learning he requires.

Again the student is admonished not to rely solely on repetition and rote learning. After he understands and repeats material, the student should reflect, meditate and continually pose questions to his teachers and his colleagues so as to get a firm grasp of what he is doing. Posing questions is better than "a month of repetition." Furthermore, only reflection and meditation can solve problems. If the student merely accepts facts (even though he understands them) without thinking about them, the material he learns remains undigested. As a further aid to learning, material that is being studied should be abstracted and written down, but only after due comprehension and reflection. Writing down half-baked material destroys intelligence and wastes time. To be sure, on some occasions there may be no time to reflect, so that the student is advised to have ink always accessible wherever he goes. He will then be able to jot down information to be later digested. If he is a scholar he should always have a book with him, carried in his sleeve.²⁴ This book should have a few blank pages in it for the purpose of note taking. To emphasize the importance of making notes rather than relying on memory alone, az-Zarnūjī quotes a saying: "He who commits to memory is [uncertain as if] in flight; but he who writes down a matter stands firm."²⁵

23. Transl., p. 53.

24. Transl., p. 66.

25. Transl., p. 62.

Two further rather important aids to learning are emphasized. One is that an education cannot be acquired overnight or obtained in haste. The student is advised to learn slowly on the principle that only "in a slow fire can a stick be straightened."²⁶ Secondly, the scholar is advised not to have any intermission in his studies.²⁷ If studying is stopped over a period of time then time is wasted and it then becomes hard for the student to get back into the proper setting. Poverty and the need to earn a living should be no deterrent to the pursuit of knowledge. According to az-Zarnūjī, plenty of poor scholars have kept on with their education, and have earned their livelihood at the same time. On the other hand, az-Zarnūjī does not begrudge a student his wealth. He is realistic enough to state that money is an asset!²⁸ Money pays for teachers, for books, for the care of one's library, and for having books written.²⁹

E. Dynamics of Learning

Az-Zarnūjī is well aware that learning cannot be acquired only by mechanical aids and rules and regulations external to the drive, aspirations and feelings of the student himself. Ethical considerations play a large role in spurring the student on to acquire an education. But over and above the moral purpose in learning, az-Zarnūjī makes many observations of a more general nature. In the first place, the student must have some aspiration or goal toward which he aims, otherwise all the perseverance and repetitive study will be of no avail.³⁰ Conversely, a high aspiration alone leads nowhere without assiduity. With this combination of interest and exertion, the student will get what he wants. If the student lets himself drift along without making an effort he would soon find that he could not comprehend even an easy proposition.

Az-Zarnūjī refers frequently to the need to tackle a job with vim and alacrity.³¹ No learning can take place if the student does not undertake his studies wholeheartedly. Approaching

26. Transl., p. 41. 27. Transl., p. 54.

28. One learned man was asked how he acquired his knowledge. He replied, "Through a rich father."

29. Transl., p. 52. 30. Transl., pp. 40-41.

31. Transl., p. 54.

a task timidly and fearfully impedes learning. The student is to avoid fatigue³² and boredom.³³ If the student becomes tired of one discipline he should keep up his interest in his education by occupying himself with another subject. When Ibn 'Abbās became tired of scholastic theology, he asked for a collection of poetry.³⁴ As studies are continued they become a sheer delight. These pleasures of knowledge are sufficient incentive for intelligent men to acquire knowledge.³⁵ Az-Zarnūjī refers here largely to pleasures derived from doing one's duty to the Mohammedan religion and having one's learning acknowledged by God, particularly in the life after death. But again he becomes realistic and says the learned man has fame, his learning lives on after he dies so that he is remembered as someone important, whereas the ignorant man when he is dead is merely under the ground and is forgotten by his fellow men.³⁶

F. The Student's Relationship to Others

We have already spoken of the social role of the student and teacher, how the student is to respect, venerate and even flatter, his teacher, and do certain menial tasks for him; how the teacher is to guide the pupil by deciding what he should study. Az-Zarnūjī goes so far as to say that the persistence of the aspiring scholar alone won't insure his education; it will be achieved only if his teacher and his father persist with him in his learning endeavors.³⁷

Association with fellow students and learned men is frequently discussed. Az-Zarnūjī suggests that the people with whom the student is thrown help determine his modes of learning and thinking. If he is exposed to lazy people, the student tends to be drawn into their slovenly ways. If he frequents the loquacious and non-reflective individuals³⁸ as well as quibblers³⁹ the student loses his ability to maintain a high intellectual level of thought. The impact on the student of inconsequential and frivolous individuals is like a contagious disease. On the other

32. Transl., p. 40. 33. Transl., p. 58.

34. Transl., p. 58. 'Abdallāh b. 'Abbās, cousin of the Prophet and famed traditionalist, d. ca. 688 A.D.

35. Transl., p. 44.

36. Transl., p. 42. 37. Transl., p. 38.

38. Transl., p. 65. 39. Transl., p. 49.

hand, the student is encouraged to associate as much as possible with scholars and men of high intellectual attainments. Learning by no means is acquired only from books and from one's teacher. One acquires knowledge by questioning and listening to venerable and intelligent individuals wherever they may be. Since one never knows where these people may be found the student must be on the lookout for them in whatever social gathering he attends.⁴⁰ If he finds such individuals he must lose no time in posing questions and discussing points of knowledge with them.⁴¹ It is on these occasions that the ink and notebooks, to which we have already referred, come in handy. A saying quoted by az-Zarnūjī is: "Discuss with people subjects of learning. Do not keep away from the enlightened."⁴²

In other words, no adequate learning can go on by the scholar who lives in an ivory tower; the student must be ever alert for an intellectual give and take with his fellow men.

As we mentioned at the beginning of our discussion of the subject of learning, az-Zarnūjī is influenced not only by rational thinking but also by the folkways and mores of the medieval Muslim. Here and there throughout the text, but more extensively in chapters 12 and 13, he gives specific directions for helping memory, preventing forgetfulness and earning a livelihood so as to facilitate education. These ideas are prelogical and primitive as are many of our current popular conceptions for improving the mind (e.g., eating fish to nourish the brain). For example, az-Zarnūjī writes that to help memorial recall one should use a toothpick, drink honey and eat the incense plant.⁴³ On the other hand, eating fresh coriander and acid apples, beholding a man crucified or passing through a camel train bring about forgetfulness.⁴⁴ Keeping poor so that one cannot even study may be due to such activities as sleeping or urinating while naked, burning up the skins of onion and garlic, washing the hands with mud and earth, and leaving spider webs in the house.⁴⁵ To aid one in acquiring wealth one should do such things as sweep the courtyard, wash pots and pans, be untiring

40. Transl., p. 50.

41. Transl., p. 49.

42. Transl., p. 48.

44. Transl., p. 69.

43. Transl., p. 68.

45. Transl., p. 71.

in reciting certain pious formulae, have a beautiful handwriting and keep a merry expression on the face.⁴⁶

As in all folkways there is sure to be some aspect of the particular prohibited or allowed activity that has rational or at least practical bases rather than prelogical or magical implications. Az-Zarnūjī does not, however, attempt to rationalize these folkways. He accepts them as part of the Mohammedan tradition as he does the rites of purification for the daily prayers. But still he keeps these folkways quite distinct from his other ideas on education. He lists them either in separate chapters or paragraphs. It is as though he were aware of the two categories of thought, logical and primitive; distinguishing them without actually acknowledging their difference. In this he goes as far as most scholars have done who lived prior to the modern scientific era.⁴⁷

II. Education in Medieval Islam

The Koran embodying the revelation vouchsafed man through the Prophet Muḥammad (d. 632), and the *sunna*, the practice of the Prophet and the community of the earliest believers, contain expressly or by implication the information required by the individual Muslim never to swerve from the straight road to salvation. In a sense, the ideal life would be a complete replica of the Prophet's behavior, actual or supposed.

Islam, then, is more than a system of religious doctrine. It is a way of life. No action is unprovided for by religious ruling. From birth to death man is expected to follow hallowed precedent. On the path to salvation no distinction can be made between important and unimportant incidents. No phase of the human existence is withdrawn from divine regulation. Transgressions are condemned in accordance with their moral or social significance, but no segment of human activity is outside the orbit of the religious law. The Prophet brought certain final truths to mankind, but alongside of them he introduced the rules

46. Transl., p. 71.

47. It must be admitted, however, that az-Zarnūjī's Byzantine contemporaries apparently had succeeded in eliminating more thoroughly non-rational procedures from the educational process.

of correct personal conduct and of the correct organization of the state.

The ever-expanding corpus of tradition preserving the innumerable items that make up the right conduct, public and private, had to be guarded and perpetuated by a class of specialists whose authority depended on the authority of the information they controlled. The traditionist rated according to the breadth of the material at his command. His usefulness to the community depended on the extent of his learning in sacred precedent. Thus knowledge, formalistic knowledge of an immense and immutable body of records whose every syllable counted heavily would be more immediately important than interpretative ability or the capacity of system-building. As a matter of fact, interpretation independent of traditional guidance came to be discouraged fairly early as too obvious a threat to the stability of a society whose rules of conduct derived for the most part from ancestral custom.

It is against this background that the singular appreciation of sheer knowledge in the Islamic world must be understood. The learned, that is, the experts in Sacred Tradition or Sacred Law, hold the keys to the kingdom of heaven. Without them, the community would be unable to live their lives conformable to divine injunction as demonstrated by the Prophet and the elect of his day.

In the Koran Allah Himself asked: "Say: Are the ones who have knowledge on the same footing as those who have not?"¹ And Muḥammad stated: "The men of knowledge are the heirs of the prophets." Ibn 'Abbās said: "The learned are ranked above the ordinary believers by seven-hundred degrees; there is a journey of five-hundred years between any two degrees."² He also said: "Solomon was given the choice between knowledge, riches and royalty, and he chose knowledge; so he was given riches and royalty along with it." And the traditionist Ibn al-Mubārak (d. 797) when asked: "Who are the people?" answered "The learned."³

Al-Ghazālī (d. 1111), the greatest theologian of Islam, de-

1. *Koran*, 39, 12.

2. Al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā' 'ulūm ad-dīn* (Būlāq, 1289/1872), I, 5; cf. Salma S. Bishlawy, *The Book of Science by Ghazālī with translation of the first three chapters* (M. A. Diss., Chicago, 1945), p. 33.

3. *Iḥyā'*, I, 7; cf. Bishlawy, *op. cit.*, 40.

clares knowledge an excellence in itself. While health and bodily soundness are desirable as means to an end—freedom from pain, unimpeded movement, gaining one's livelihood, etc.—knowledge is desirable *per se*. It is a means of acquiring a share in the next world. Closeness to God can be reached only through knowledge. Man is the noblest creature on earth, the intellect his noblest attribute. However much the individual branches of knowledge may differ in importance and dignity, learning as such is humankind's highest attainment.

The mystic, Ḥātim al-Aṣamm (d. 851), stressed its moral values when he pointed out the eight benefits he had gained from knowledge. True knowledge helps your soul to pry itself loose from its attachment to people, its devotion to the lusts and vanities of this world, its craving for power and glory, its exposedness to the temptations of envy and enmity, its unscrupulousness in the struggle for existence and its reliance on skills or wealth rather than on the Lord.⁴

Thus, there may be dissent regarding what is the true knowledge, but the value of knowledge and the standing of its bearers are beyond dispute.

The religious and social function of learning determines its scope. The exegesis of the Koran, the preservation of Tradition, and the development of an all-inclusive system of theology and jurisprudence, remain its principal tasks throughout the ages. Literature and history are indispensable auxiliaries, geography and a certain amount of natural science are welcome. But natural science with its empirical methods and the stimulus it provides for non-theological speculation is potentially dangerous and suspect to the pious. The Muslim contribution to it was always almost made against rather than with the support of the authorities, although it must be said that a number of theologians, and al-Ghazālī amongst them, endorsed a more liberal system of intellectual endeavor than the somewhat narrow-minded az-Zarnūjī. There is also considerable significance in the fact that Shī'a institutions showed more interest in Hellenistic science than orthodox Sunnite. Avicenna (d. 1037) may exemplify what Muslim education at its most generous had to offer: he went through a training in literature, dogmatic theol-

4. Al-Ghazālī, *Ayyuhā 'l-walad*, ed. and trans. G. H. Scherer (Beirut, 1933), pp. 64–66.

ogy, logic, Aristotelian philosophy, arithmetic, algebra, geometry, and in addition, studied medicine.⁵ As-Sirāfī (d. 978) received instruction in the Koran, its exegesis, jurisprudence, syntax, lexicology, prosody, arithmetic, geometry, tradition, and history.⁶ It should be realized, however, that the fairly numerous personalities of this kind were devotees of an educational ideal almost wholly divorced from that represented by the typical traditionalist or jurisconsult.

The learning of this typical Muslim *faqīh* is authoritarian. Revelation and tradition are its foundation, the commentary the principal vehicle of advance. Salvation of the soul, not control of nature and society is the end. Preservation and systemization of knowledge rather than expansion is aimed at. In striking contrast to the Greeks the culture of the body is neglected and music banned; even more important, there is no political education of the individual. There have been impressive studies in what we should call political science. The art of administration, the techniques of taxation, were discussed in great detail; even utopian dreams found an occasional outlet in literature. But nowhere in the Medieval Muslim world was the civic outlook instilled into education. Education prepared for this world only as a proving-ground for admission to the next. The loneliness of the struggle for salvation outweighed communal consciousness and political aspirations in the shaping of educational ideals and procedures.

When az-Zarnūjī wrote, organized education was in its heyday. The very nature of its basic subject matter had always kept it closely associated with the religious center of the community, the mosque. The teacher leaning against a pillar in the court of the mosque with a group of students around him in a semi-circle, side by side with similar groups—this is the typical picture of Muslim instruction. The teacher dictating, the students taking down his words; or someone reading a text, the teacher's or an older authority's, and the teacher expanding and commenting—this is the typical procedure. Successful completion of the course brought permission to transmit and expound on one's own the work or works acquired from the teacher. But study might continue in another field or with

5. Cf. Totah, *op. cit.*, p. 51.

6. Cf. Yāqūt, *Iršād al-arīb ilā ma'rifat al-adīb. Dictionary of Learned Men*, ed. D. S. Margoliouth (Leiden, 1907-1927), III, 102, and Totah, *loc. cit.*

an especially famed scholar even after the erstwhile pupil had joined the ranks of the professors.

To the end of the Middle Ages the independent scholar, maintaining himself from student fees, remained the typical representative of learning. He would be attached by habit to a certain pillar in a certain mosque, but there was nothing to prevent him from changing the locale of his instruction. Even as traveling in pursuit of knowledge was customary—and here the Muslims continued the Greek academic tradition of journeying from one center of learning to another—so the scholar easily transferred his activity from one Muslim country to another.

As time went on, however, regular institutions of learning developed, usually organized with a view to permanency through the munificence of a prince or high official. Chairs were endowed, buildings erected, libraries and student-houses attached, and provisions made for the maintenance of students. The *madrasa*, the house of learning, differed little from the mosque: devotional exercises as well as studying were performed in both places; but instruction was the *madrasa*'s prime purpose. Hundreds upon hundreds of *madrasas* can be traced all over Muslim territory as the Middle Ages draw to a close, among the first to be founded and the most famous, the Nizāmiyya in Baghdad. Founded by the great vizier, Nizām al-Mulk (d. 1092) in 1065 (it was actually opened in 1067) the *madrasa* was honored for some years by the presence of al-Ghazālī on its staff. While jurisprudence, *fiqh*, was the primary subject for whose study the *madrasa* was originally established—each *madrasa* being usually intended for the cultivation of one particular law school—it was not the only one. The curriculum included the philological sciences, Koran reading and exegesis, and the science of Tradition, *ḥadīth*.⁷

It is evident that az-Zarnūjī had in mind the *madrasa* and its conditions when he composed his *Ta'lim*, for in his time more and more scholars achieved the relative economic security of a fixed position, and the larger and more widely renowned *madrasas* had become the true fountain-heads of traditional learning.

7. On the mosque as a center of studies as well as on the *madrasa* cf. the excellent article *Masjid* by Johannes Pedersen, *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, III, 315-376, and especially, pp. 350-367. The article contains ample references to source material and secondary literature.

AUTHOR'S APOLOGY

In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate. Praise is due God who favored the sons of Adam with knowledge and responsible action [*'amal*] above all creation; blessings and peace upon Muḥammad, the Lord of the Arabs and non-Arabs, and upon his family and his companions from whom all knowledge and wisdom spring.

During our times I have observed many students of science striving to attain knowledge but failing to do so, and debarred from its uses and benefits: [to wit] action in accordance with it and spreading it abroad, [and they reached this dead end] because they missed the [proper] methods of learning and abandoned the conditions [upon which science can be acquired]. Everyone who misses his way goes astray, and does not reach the goal, regardless of whether it is modest or glorious. [In view of this situation] I sought and desired to explain to them the ways of studying that I had either read about in books or heard from my masters, the learned and wise, hoping that those sincerely interested in [my exposition] would pray for my deliverance and redemption on the Day of Judgment.

After I had asked God for guidance in the choice [of the material] I composed this tract and entitled it "Instruction of the Student—The Method of Learning," dividing it into [thirteen] chapters:

1. On the nature and merit of knowledge and learning.
2. On the purpose of study.
3. On the choosing of the subject matter of learning, the teachers, one's fellow students and one's permanent affiliation.
4. On respecting knowledge and those who possess it.
5. On industriousness, perseverance and assiduity (in the pursuit of learning).
6. On the beginning of study, its amount and its organization.

7. On placing one's faith in God.
8. On the time for the acquisition of knowledge.
9. On helpfulness and good advice.
10. On the means useful to the attainment of knowledge.
11. On abstinence from evil during the pursuit of learning.
12. What creates memory and what brings about forgetfulness.
13. Which things bring about and which prevent earning a livelihood, and which things augment or diminish the years of one's life.

CHAPTER ONE

On the Nature and Merit of Knowledge and Learning

The Messenger of God [i.e., Muḥammad] said: The quest for knowledge is incumbent upon every Muslim man and Muslim woman. Know that it is not obligatory for every Muslim, man or woman, to seek all [aspects of] learning, but only that in keeping with his station in life. It is said: The most meritorious knowledge is that in keeping with one's station and the most meritorious action is to maintain one's station. It is necessary for the Muslim to strive for as much knowledge as he may need in his station whatever this is. Since he will have to perform his prayers he must needs know as much of the prayer ritual as will help him acquit himself of his duty to pray. [Furthermore], knowledge of his [other] religious obligations is incumbent upon him. For whatever leads to the ascertaining of duty is itself duty and what leads to the determining of obligation is itself obligation. This applies to fasting, and also to [the payment of the] poor-tax if [the believer] possesses wealth, and to the pilgrimage if one is under obligation to perform it. It also applies to trading if one is engaged in commerce.

[Someone] said to Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan:¹ Will you not compose a book on asceticism? He replied: I composed a book on trading. [With this answer] he meant to say: the [true] ascetic is he who is careful to protect himself against dubious and unsanctioned practices in commerce. The same thing [gathering of special knowledge] is required with respect to all the other occupations and professions. Everyone who works in one of them is in duty bound to learn how to guard against what is

1. Abū 'Abdallāh Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan b. Farqad as-Ṣaibānī, legist, student of Abū Ḥanīfa, d. 804. (All the jurists mentioned in this text, with two exceptions, follow the Ḥanafite rite; so their school affiliation need not be mentioned.)

forbidden practice in it. Likewise, knowledge of the states of the heart [such as] complete reliance on God, repentance, fear, satisfaction [with His dispensation] is imperative, as it applies [to people] in every walk in life. And the nobility of learning is not hidden from anyone since it is peculiar to humankind. Exclusive of knowledge, men as well as all other animals are associated with every virtue, such as valor, courage, strength, generosity, compassion. Learning is the exception. Through it God revealed the preeminence of Adam over the angels whom He commanded to prostrate themselves before him.² Learning is noble for it leads to that fear of God which entitles [the believer] to God's benevolence and to eternal bliss. In this vein, Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan Abū 'Abdallāh³ said:

1. Learn, for learning is an adornment for him who possesses it, a virtue and a preface⁴ to every praiseworthy action.
2. Profit each day by an increase of learning and swim in the seas of beneficial knowledge.
3. Give yourself up to the study of jurisprudence, for the knowledge of jurisprudence is the best guide to piety and fear of God, and it is the straightest path to the goal.
4. It is the sign leading on to the ways of proper guidance; it is the fortress which saves [one] from all hardships.
5. Verily, one godly person versed in jurisprudence is more powerful against Satan than a thousand [ordinary] worshippers.

Likewise, [knowledge has an important bearing] on all other qualities [of human character] such as generosity and avarice, cowardice and courage, arrogance and humility, chastity [and debauchery], prodigality and parsimony and so on. For arrogance, avarice, cowardice and prodigality are illicit. Only through knowledge of them and their opposites is protection against them possible. Thus learning is prescribed for all of us.

The Most Illustrious Imām, the martyred Sayyid Nāṣir ad-

2. Cf. *Koran*, 7, 10.

3. The Text erroneously has Ibn 'Abdallāh for Abū 'Abdallāh.

4. Lit: title page.

Dīn Abū 'l-Qāsim composed a book on Ethics [or: Moral Philosophy]⁵—and praiseworthy is what he composed!—[a book] which is necessary for every Muslim to bear in mind! Keeping in mind [the prescriptions applying to] what comes up only upon certain occasions is a "collective duty."⁶ [This means that] when some [people] fulfill it in a given place, others are excused from this [duty]; on the other hand, if no one fulfills it the sin resulting from such omission falls on the whole community. It is for the Imām to direct and for the community to submit with regard to this [obligation].

It has been said that knowledge of matters affecting a person under all conditions holds a position equal to that of food; it cannot be dispensed with by anybody. Knowledge of matters affecting a person upon certain occasions holds a position equal to that of medicine which is needed at stipulated times only. Knowledge of the stars holds a position equal to that of disease; [but] its study is prohibited because it is both harmful and useless. Escape from the decree of God and his dispensation is impossible [so the study of the stars is both futile and sacrilegious].

Every Muslim is expected to occupy himself at all times with the mention [of the name] of God and His invocation and supplication; with reading the Koran, giving alms that ward off calamities, asking forgiveness and safety in this world and the next; so that God may defend him from trials and tribulations. For he who is granted [the gift of] invocation will not be denied a favorable response. If calamity is decreed to him, it will inevitably befall him, but God will make the [tribulation] easier for him to bear and will give him the patience [that is bestowed by] the invocation.

[Astronomy is forbidden] with the qualification that one is permitted to study just enough of it to determine the *qibla*⁷ and the times of prayer. The study of the science of medicine is al-

5. The *Kitāb al-aḥlāq* referred to cannot be identified with certainty. Abū 'l-Qāsim al-Ḥasan ar-Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī's (d. 1108) book of this title may be meant. Ḥājji Halifa, *Lexicon bibliographicum* . . . , ed. G. Flügel (London, 1835-1858), I, 200-205, where the *aḥlāq* works are listed, does not help.

6. *Farq 'alā sabīl al-kifāya*.

7. *Qibla*: the direction toward Mecca or, more accurately, toward the central Muslim sanctuary of the Ka'ba in this city. This direction has to be observed during the *ṣalāt*, the ritual prayer.

lowed because it deals with accidental [secondary] causes. Therefore its study is allowed just as is [that] of other accidental causes. The Prophet treated himself medically. It is related that aš-Šāfi'ī⁸ said that science has two branches: the science of legal doctrine which has to do with religious problems [*adyān*] and the science of medicine which has to do with [human] bodies [*abdān*]; any study that goes beyond [these sciences] is only a method of attracting an audience. As for commenting on matters of learning it is a [secondary] means through which the nature of a propounded subject may become clear. *Al-fiqh* is the science of the fine points of knowledge.

Abū Ḥanifa⁹ said: "Jurisprudence is a person's knowledge of his rights and duties." he said further:

The purpose of learning is to act by it while the purpose of action is the abandoning of the perishable for that which lasts forever. It is necessary for man neither to neglect his soul nor what helps or injures it in this life and in the next life. Hence man should try to provide what is useful while avoiding what is harmful to the [soul], lest his intelligence and his knowledge become weapons [arguments] against him and his punishment be increased. May God preserve us from His wrath and His punishment.

On [the subject of] the virtues and excellences of learning there exist [a considerable number of] Koranic verses and sound [i.e., well authenticated] and well-known traditions. We shall not bother to record these [here] lest this our book grow overly long.

8. aš-Šāfi'ī, founder of the Šāfi'ite school of Muslim law, d. 819.

9. Abū Ḥanifa, founder of the Ḥanafite school of Muslim law, to which az-Zarnūjī adhered. He died in 767.

CHAPTER TWO

On the Purpose of Study

Purpose is necessary in the study of science since it is the intention in which every deed is rooted, according to the words of the Prophet:

"Deeds [or: works] [are measured] by their intentions,"—this is a genuine tradition—and:

How many are the deeds which bear the image of the deeds of this world and become, through their good intention, of the deeds of the next world! and how many again are the deeds which bear the image of the deeds of the next world, but then become, through their evil intention, of the deeds of this world!

And it is meet for the student in his quest for knowledge to strive for the good will of God, the future life, the removal of ignorance from himself and from the rest of the ignorant, the conservation¹⁰ of religion, and the survival of Islam. For the survival of Islam depends on knowledge. And the ascetic life and piety are not perfect where there is ignorance.

The professor, the venerable Šaiḥ, the Most Illustrious Imām, Burhān ad-Dīn,¹¹ author of the *Hidāya*,¹² recited a poem by an unnamed author:

1. An immoral man of learning is a great evil, but a greater evil still is an ignoramus leading a godly life.
2. Both [these types of men] are a great trial everywhere to him who clings to both [knowledge and godliness] in his religion.

10. Lit: revival.

11. 'Alī b. abī Bakr al-Farghānī al-Marghīnānī, famous Ḥanafite lawyer, ob. 1197.

12. *al-Hidāya fī furū' al-fiqh*, a renowned work on Muslim law.

[The student should] aim [with his knowledge] at rendering thanks [to God] for a healthy mind and a sound body, not, however, at attracting people toward himself, or reining in the vanities of the world, or obtaining honors from the king [*sulṭān*], and the like.

Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan said: "If the people, all of them, were my slaves I would enfranchise them and free myself from being their patron. And he who finds pleasure in knowledge and in acting according to it, only rarely does he desire man's [worldly] possessions."

Thé Šaiḥ, the Most Illustrious Imām, the professor, Qiwām ad-Dīn Ḥammād b. Ibrāhīm b. Ismā'il aṣ-Ṣaffār al-Anṣārī¹³ recited a poem by Abū Ḥanīfa, dictating it to us:

1. Whoso strives for knowledge for the life to come obtains an increase [or: surplus] in righteousness.
2. But woe to those that strive for it to obtain an advantage over [or: from] their fellow-believers [*'ibād*]!

[This is so] unless possibly he seeks position in order to command what is good and forbid what is evil, and in order to promote the truth and strengthen religion, and not in order to satisfy his ego and his desires. And that [i.e., the repression of selfish aims] becomes more and more possible in proportion as [the learned in a worldly position] undertakes to command the good and forbid the evil.

And it is meet that he who strives for knowledge should reflect thereon. For, verily, one should study science with great assiduity and not apply it [this science] to this base, small and perishable world.

A poem:

1. This world is more worthless than the worthless, and its lover is baser than the base.
2. It renders people deaf by its magic and makes them blind so they become perplexed, with no guide.

And it behooves him who seeks knowledge not to debase himself by desiring what should not be desired, and abstain from those things which degrade science and its bearers. One

13. Qiwām ad-Dīn Ḥammād . . . : probably the son of the juris-consult, Ibrāhīm b. Ismā'il aṣ-Ṣaffār, d. 1139/40.

should also be modest, for modesty lies between arrogance and humility. Chastity, too, is like that [i.e., the golden means between two extremes]. This can be learnt from the *Kitāb al-aḥlāq*.¹⁴

The Šaiḥ, the Most Illustrious Imām, the late professor Rukn al-Islām,¹⁵ who is known as al-Adīb al-Muḥtār, recited for me a poem composed by himself:

1. Verily, modesty is a quality of the god-fearing, and by its means the pious mounts to the heights of Paradise.
2. A wondrous thing is the wondering of the ignorant whether he is [or: is to be] happy or wretched.
3. Or [his wondering] in what way his life will end, or whether his soul on the day of his death will descend to inferior regions or be raised to a sublime place.
4. Truly, pride belongs to our Lord, an attribute peculiar to Him—therefore avoid it and fear God.

Abū Ḥanīfa spoke to his companions thus: "Make your turbans ample and enlarge your sleeves." Verily, he spoke thus in order not to cause science and its bearers to be disdained.

And it is compulsory for him who seeks knowledge to acquire the *Kitāb al-waṣīyya* [the Bequest] which Abū Ḥanīfa wrote to Yūsuf b. Ḥālid as-Samtī¹⁶ when he returned to his people. He who seeks [to obtain this book] will find it. Our late teacher, the Šaiḥ al-Islām, the proof of the imāms, 'Alī b. abī Bakr [al-Marghīnānī] commanded me to write it¹⁷ out on returning to my country, which I did. Both he who teaches the higher knowledge, [*mudarris*, teacher in a *madrasa*], and he who gives legal opinions [*muftī*] cannot dispense with it in their dealings with people.

14. Cf. the book quoted on p. 23.

15. Rukn al-Islām al-Adīb al-Muḥtār: az-Zarnūjī seems to refer to Rukn al-Islām Muḥammad b. abī Bakr Imāmzāda, Muftī of Buḥārā, d. 1177/8.

16. Died 795.

17. Abū Ḥanīfa's booklet.

CHAPTER THREE

*On Choosing the Subject Matter of Learning,
One's Teacher, One's Fellow Students
and One's Permanent Connection*

When undertaking the study of knowledge it is necessary to choose among all the branches of learning the one most beneficial to oneself.¹⁸ One should [also] select what is essential according to the stage reached in one's religious development and finally [one should] choose what will be necessary for one in the future. And thus [the individual] perfects himself in the knowledge of the unity of God and learns about Almighty God through logical evidence. For the faith of him who blindly follows authority, even though it may be correct in our¹⁹ view, still is defective because of his failure to ask for proofs.

It is essential to choose ancient before new things. It is said: "Stick to ancient things while avoiding new things." Beware of becoming engrossed in those disputes which come about after one has cut loose from the ancient authorities. For [such dispute] keeps the student away from knowledge, wastes away his life and leaves him with [nothing but] solitude and hostility. [A dispute] is one of the indications of the Hour²⁰ and the annihilation of both knowledge and doctrine. Thus is it stated by Tradition.

Regarding the choice of a teacher, it is important to select the most learned, the most pious and the most advanced in years. In this way [after due deliberation and reflection] Abū Ḥanīfa chose Ḥammad b. abī Sulaimān²¹ saying: "I found him

venerable, with a serious mien, gentle and patient." He [also said]: "I was on safe ground with Ḥammad b. abī Sulaimān and I grew." Then he stated: "I heard a sage from Samarqand say: 'Verily, one of the students of knowledge consulted me about the inquiry into "science" and [after the consultation] he decided to take a journey to Buhārā in order to acquire learning [there]'. "

Thus is it necessary to ask advice in all matters. Verily, God Almighty commanded [even] His messenger to seek counsel about all of his affairs. Although [in reality] there was no one more intelligent than [Muḥammad], nevertheless he was instructed to consult with others. So he sought advice from his friends in all affairs including domestic matters.

'Alī b. abī Ṭālib²² stated: "No man ever perished from seeking advice." It is said: "A man, half a man and nothing. A man is the one who is intelligent in his judgment and consults [others]. A half man is he who is intelligent in his judgment but does not seek advice or seeks advice but is not intelligent, while one who is nothing is he who is neither intelligent nor seeks advice." Ja'far aṣ-Ṣādiq²³ said to Sufyān at-Taurī:²⁴ "Seek advice in your affairs of those who are god-fearing. The quest of knowledge is among the most exalted and difficult tasks;^{24a} consequently seeking advice in study of this kind is most important and most urgent."

Al-Ḥakīm [as-Samarqandī]²⁵ stated: "If you come to Buhārā do not hasten hither and thither from one master to another. Rather, be patient a couple of months until you reflect concerning the choice of a teacher.²⁶ For, if you come to a learned man and begin to study with him right away, his teaching may often not be to your liking. [If this is the case] you leave him and come to another teacher. But no blessing will come to you by taking up your studies in this manner. Hence reflect two months about the [right] choice of a teacher and seek advice in order

22. 'Alī b. abī Ṭālib, the 4th caliph, 656-661.

23. See Introduction I, footnote 12.

24. Sufyān at-Taurī, outstanding theologian, traditionist and jurist, d. 778.

24a. Lit: things.

25. al-Ḥakīm as-Samarqandī: Abū 'l-Qāsim Ishāq b. Muḥammad, known as al-Ḥ. as-S., judge in Samarqand, d. 953.

26. Lit: reflect and choose.

18. Lit: of all the branches of learning the best part.

19. I.e., the Muslims'.

20. I.e., the Last Day.

21. Ḥammād b. abī Sulaimān (text omits *abī*), a teacher of Abū Ḥanīfa, d. 738.

that it will not be necessary to leave him and withdraw from him. [It is better] that you remain with him until your studies have prospered and you have come to profit a great deal from the knowledge you have attained. Know that patience and perseverance form a large core in all affairs but [nevertheless] they are rare, as it is said in a verse:

The effort in the attainment of glory wearies but persistence is rare among men.

It is said: Courage is the endurance of one hour. Hence it is necessary for the pursuer of knowledge to be firm and exert patience with his teacher and his book so as not to leave [his studies] incomplete.²⁷ [Also exert patience] with one discipline in order not to be distracted by another discipline before the first is perfected. [Likewise have patience] with a country so as not to migrate to another land unnecessarily. For all these changes²⁸ disturb one's affairs, preoccupy the heart, lose time and injure the teacher. It is essential to be strong in abstaining from what one's soul and one's desire wish one to do.

A poet said:

Verily, desire is baseness in its essence, and the victim of any desire is the victim of baseness.

And [it is necessary] to be patient in calamity and affliction. It is said: The treasure of benefits lies on the arches of calamities.

I recited a poem which is said to be by 'Alī b. abī Ṭālib:

1. The pursuit of knowledge is not carried on without six things which I shall indicate to you through words that are clear:

2. Ingenious acumen, fervent desire, patience, sufficient sustenance, guidance of a teacher, and length of time.

As to the selection of one's companions it is necessary to choose the one who is diligent, religious, gifted with a good character and understanding; [on the other hand, it is essential] to escape from the one who is indolent and negligent, loquacious, corrupt, and a trouble maker. It is said in a verse:

27. Lit: mutilated.

28. Lit: things.

1. Do not inquire concerning a man but observe his companion, for verily one companion imitates the other companion;

2. And if the companion is evil, then quickly shun him, but if [the companion] is good, associate with him. In this way you will be led in the right direction.

Another poem was recited to me:

1. Do not associate yourself with a companion indolent in his ways. How often through the corruption of another man is a pious man corrupted.

2. Contagion spreads quickly from the lazy to the [lively] one, just as when one places a [burning] coal in ashes, the fire is allayed.

The Prophet said: Everyone born, is born a Muslim unless his parents make him a Jew, a Christian or a Magian. This is the Tradition.²⁹ And it is said according to the Wisdom of the Persians:

1. A bad friend is worse than an evil snake, [swear] by the pure essence of the Eternal God!

2. A bad companion leads you toward Hell; take a good companion in order to secure success.^{29a}

And it is said:

1. If you seek knowledge from those who possess it or from a witness who tells you about what you know not;

2. Appraise the country from its reputation and the companion by his companion.

29. Tradition, *Ḥadīth*. Technically, the word is used for "a communication or narrative . . . of a record of action or sayings of the Prophet and his companions." (Th. W. Juynboll, *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, II, 189).

29a. In the text these lines are quoted in Persian.

CHAPTER FOUR

On Respecting Knowledge and Those Who Possess It

Know that in the study of science one does not acquire learning nor profit from it unless one holds in esteem knowledge and those who possess it. One [must also] glorify and venerate the teacher. It is said: He who attains knowledge does not do so except through respect, while he who fails [in this goal] does so by ceasing to respect and venerate learning and its bearers. [In addition] it is stated: Respect is preferable to obedience, for do you not perceive that man does not become an unbeliever through rebellion [against divine law] but rather by making light of [his rebellion] and by discarding reverence. One aspect of glorifying knowledge consists in holding the teacher in esteem. 'Alī said: "I am the slave of him who taught me one letter of the alphabet. If he wishes he may sell me; if he so desires he may set me free; and if he cares to he may make use of me as a slave."

On this subject I [az-Zarnūjī] have composed these lines:

1. It seems to me the greatest duty is that which is due the teacher, and that which is the most necessary thing for each Moslem to observe.

2. Indeed it is a duty to offer him a thousand drachmae as a sign of honor for his instruction in one single letter of the alphabet.

Verily, he who teaches you one letter of those you need for your religious instruction is your father in religion. Our teacher, the venerable Imām, Sadīd ad-Dīn al-Širāzī,³⁰ used to say: "Our elders stated: whoever wishes his son to become learned will have to cultivate traveling scholars,³¹ esteem them, venerate them as

30. Sadīd ad-Dīn aš-Širāzī: probably mistake for S. aš-Šarghī, of Buḥārā, d. 1177.

31. Lit: scholars from abroad.

well as offer them remuneration." Verily, if [in the case of such comportment] one's son does not become learned, one's grandson does. In venerating the teacher [among other things it is necessary to avoid] walking in front of him or sitting in his place. Also, one should not begin speaking in his presence without his permission, and then one should not speak to any great extent before him. One should not ask him any [question] when he is weary. One should observe the correct time [i.e., not intrude at the wrong moment] and not knock on the door but have patience until [the teacher] comes out. In short, one should seek his approval, avoid his resentment and obey his commands in those things which are not sinful in the eyes of God—but never is created man to be obeyed in rebellion against the creator. The Prophet spoke thus: Verily, the most evil man is he who relinquishes his religion for the religion of other men. In this, he is sinning against God.³²

Revering the teacher includes respecting the teacher's children and those who belong to him. Our instructor, the venerable Imām, Burhān ad-Dīn, author of the *Ḥidāya*, used to narrate that one of the greatest imāms of Buḥārā [at one time] had sat lecturing and had sometimes risen in the middle of his discourse. When asked the reason [for this] he explained: Verily, the son of my teacher played with boys on the street and came sometimes to the gate of the Mosque. As often as I saw him I arose for him in order to honor my teacher.

The judge, the Imām Faḥr ad-Dīn al-Arsābandī,³³ was the chief imām in Marw; the Sultan held him in the highest regard. Faḥr ad-Dīn frequently said: Verily, I have reached this rank only by serving my teacher, for I have served my teacher, the judge, the Imām Abū Yazīd ad-Dabūsī.³⁴ I both waited on him and prepared his food for thirty years but I never ate anything thereof. The venerable Imām, the most glorious sun

32. Maḥ. text differs slightly and is less complete.

33. Faḥr ad-Dīn al-Arsābandī, judge in Marw, probably identical with the judge and Ḥanafite leader, Abū Bakr Muḥammad b. al-Ḥusain, d. 1118, who is mentioned by Sam'ānī, *Kitāb al-ansāb* (London and Leiden, 1912), foll. 25v–26r.

34. Abū Yazīd ad-Dabūsī: probably error for Abū Zaid ad-Dabūsī, d. in Buḥārā, in 1039.

among the imāms, al-Ḥulwānī,³⁵ left Buḥārā and settled for some time in a certain town because of an incident which befell him. His students visited him with the exception of the venerable Imām, the Judge, Abū Bakr az-Zaranjī.³⁶ When he met him al-Ḥulwānī asked him: "Why did you not come to visit me?" Abū Bakr replied: "I was occupied serving my mother." Al-Ḥulwānī answered: "You will obtain a livelihood but you will not attain the glamour of teaching." And this is just what happened for [Abū Bakr] lived most of his life in villages and was unable to carry on lectures. Thus is deprived of the fruits of learning who has slighted his teacher, and only in a small way does he profit from his knowledge.

1. Neither the teacher nor the physician advise you unless they are honored.

2. So bear your disease patiently if you have wronged its healer and be satisfied with your ignorance if you have wronged a teacher.

It is reported that the Caliph, Hārūn ar-Rašīd,³⁷ sent his son to al-Ašma'ī³⁸ to take up the study of science [i.e., in this context, grammar] and *adab*.^{38a} One day [the Caliph] saw [al-Ašma'ī] purifying himself and washing his feet while the son of the Caliph poured water over his feet. So [the Caliph] reprimanded al-Ašma'ī in this manner saying: "Indeed, I sent him [my son] to you to learn grammar and be instructed in *adab*, so why is it that you don't ask him to pour water with one hand and wash your foot with the other hand?"

One way of holding knowledge in esteem is through Veneration of the Book [the Koran]. Hence it behooves the student not to take up the Book unless he is in a state of [ritual] purity. It has been told concerning the venerable Imām, the sun of the imāms, al-Ḥulwānī, that he said: "Verily, I obtained this learn-

35. al-Ḥulwānī: Šams al-a'imma Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Ḥulwānī of Buḥārā, legist, d. 1056 or 1057.

36. Abū Bakr az-Zaranjī: mistake for Bakr (b. Muḥammad) az-Zaranjārī, d. 1118, of whom G. Flügel, *Die Klassen der hanefitschen Rechtsgelehrten*, Abh. philol.-hist. Kl. Sächs. Ges. d. Wiss., III (1861), 267-358, p. 304, states expressly that he studied under al-Ḥulwānī.

37. 786-809 A.D.

38. al-Ašma'ī, famous grammarian, d. 831.

38a. Belles-lettres and polite deportment.

ing by means of veneration for I never took up paper unless I was pure." And the venerable Imām, the sun of the imāms, as-Saraḥsī,³⁹ had a stomach ache. It was his wont to repeat the Koran at night. So he purified himself seventeen times [each time after he had been compelled to relieve nature] in order not to resume recitation without being pure. He did this since learning is light and purification is light; thus the light of learning is increased by [purification].

The required veneration [of the Book] includes the obligation not to stretch out one's foot toward the Book, to place books of [Koran] interpretation above other Books, and not to place anything else above the Book. Our teacher, the venerable Imām, Burhān ad-Dīn often told about when a certain Šaiḥ [saw] a scholar putting an inkwell on the Book, he said to him in Persian "*bar na-yābī*"—"You will reap no fruit" [from your labors owing to this act of disrespect].

It was our teacher, the judge, the most illustrious glory of Islam, known as Qādīḥān,⁴⁰ who used to say: "If one does not [break the rules for handling the Koran] from a wish to treat the Book with disdain there is no harm in so doing, but it is better to guard oneself against [the possibility of such a breach of rules]".

The required veneration implies the duty to write the Book beautifully and not in a cramped style, and not to leave notes in the margin except when it cannot be helped. When Abū Ḥanīfa saw someone writing the Book in a cramped style, he said: "Do not cramp your handwriting. If you live you will regret it and if you die you will be taken to task [for so doing, on Judgment Day]." It is told of the venerable Imām, Majd ad-Dīn as-Saraḥsī,⁴¹ that he stated: "Let us not write in a cramped style lest we regret it and let us not make selections [abridgments] lest we regret it; and let us not omit to collate [what we have written] lest we regret it." And the form of the Book must be square. For this is the form [employed by] Abū Ḥanīfa.

39. Šams al-a'imma Abū Bakr Muḥammad b. Aḥmad as-Saraḥsī, jurist, d. ca. 1106/7.

40. Faḥr ad-Dīn al-Ḥasan b. Maṣṣūr al-Ūzjandī, known as Qādīḥān, jurist, d. 1196.

41. Not identified.

It is the easiest for lifting, placing and reading. And it is necessary not to have any red color in the Book for thus was the usage of the philosophers but not the usage of our ancestors; to our Šaihs⁴² the use of red mixture [for writing] is abhorrent.

Veneration of learning includes veneration of one's companions in the quest of knowledge and our fellows in the lecture room. Adulation is blameworthy except in the quest of knowledge; for it will be necessary to praise one's teacher and one's fellow students in order that one can profit from their learning.

And it is essential in seeking knowledge to listen to knowledge and wisdom with reverence and veneration even if one hears one question and one word a thousand times. It is said: he whose respect after a thousand times is not equal to his respect the first time [he hears these things], is not worthy of knowledge. In seeking knowledge it is necessary not to choose oneself the kind of learning to pursue, but to entrust the matter to the teacher. For indeed experience has come to the teacher in these matters so that he has more knowledge of what is needed for each person and what is suitable to the nature [of each student]. The venerable Imām, the most glorious teacher, Burhān [al-Ḥaqq] wa'd-Dīn⁴³ used to say: "In the quest for learning in early times the students entrusted their problems of instruction to their teacher and in this manner their goal and their aim, but now they make their own choice and they do not reach their proposed goal [in religious and legal knowledge]." It is related that Muḥammad b. Ismā'il al-Buḥārī⁴⁴ came to Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan with the Book of Prayer [probably a Law Book]. And Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan said to him: "Go out and learn the science of Tradition," since indeed he estimated that this [kind of] knowledge was better suited to his nature. So [this student] investigated the science of Tradition and finally became superior to all the other imāms of Tradition.

It further behooves the student not to sit near the teacher during the lecture except under necessity, rather is it essential that the pupils sit in a semi-circle at a certain distance from the

42. I.e., theologians.

43. Not in Maḥ. text.

44. Muḥammad b. Ismā'il al-Buḥārī, one of the greatest traditionists in Islam, d. 870.

teacher, for indeed this is more appropriate to the respect due [the teacher]. And it is necessary in the quest of knowledge to be on one's guard against shameful traits of character, for verily these are the howling dogs of the spirit. The Messenger of God has said: "The angels do not enter a home in which is a dog or a picture." Verily, man only learns through the medium of the angel, and certain shameful traits are known from the *Kitāb al-aḥlāq*—and this book of ours cannot offer a discussion of these traits—particularly pride; for as long as pride is harbored knowledge cannot be attained.

It is said:

Knowledge is hostile to the haughty youth just as the torrent is hostile to the highest place.

It is also said:

1. All glory is attained by exertion, not by luck—for is luck without exertion glorious?
2. How many a slave ranks with the free, and how many a free-born man ranks with the slave!

CHAPTER FIVE

*On Industriousness, Perseverance and Assiduity
[in the pursuit of learning]*

Furthermore, earnestness, perseverance and assiduity are indispensable in the quest for knowledge. This is indicated in the Koran in the words of the Exalted One:⁴⁵ "Those who have earnestly striven in our cause, we shall surely lead them along our ways"; and "Yaḥyà, take the Book with power."⁴⁶ It is said: He who seeks something and is industrious [in so doing] finds it and he who knocks at the door and is persistent [succeeds in] entering. And it is said: To the extent to which you pursue something you will reach what you desire. It is said: Industriousness of three kinds of people is essential in [the pursuit of] science and learning. These people are the student, the teacher and the father if he is among the living.

The venerable Imām, the most glorious professor, Sadīd ad-Dīn as-Širāzī, recited to me a poem composed by aš-Šāfi'ī:

1. Earnest application makes accessible every remote affair and industriousness opens every locked door.
2. The creature of God most worthy to excite grief is a man of high aspirations who is worn out by a life of straightened circumstances.
3. The afflictions of the wise and the easy life of the fool point up the wisdom of destiny.
4. Lack of wealth will nourish intellectual power: [wealth and intellect are] opposites, how far apart!

A poem by another author was recited to me:

1. Do you desire to become learned and skilled in argu-

45. 29, 69.

46. 19, 13.

ment except by labor? There are various kinds of stupidity.

2. No gain of riches is possible without difficulties which you must take upon yourself. And hence how is it possible for learning [to be acquired without difficulty]?

Abū 't-Ṭayyib [al-Mutanabbī]⁴⁷ said:

I do not see a fault among the faults of men like the imperfection of those able to reach perfection.

And it is essential in the seeking of knowledge to maintain a vigil throughout the nights, as the poet says:

1. By means of a large amount of hard work you gain the highest distinction. So he who seeks learning keeps awake during the night.
2. You strive after glory but then you sleep at night. He who seeks pearls immerses himself in the sea.
3. The height of [the builder's] blocks depends on the height of his aspirations; a man's dignity rests on his nightly vigils.
4. Whoso desires elevation without fatigue wastes his life in the quest for the absurd.
5. I have forsaken sleep at night to win your satisfaction, O Lord of Lords.
6. So let me attain the winning of knowledge and let me reach the utmost degree of accomplishment.

It is said: Take night as your camel, with it you will attain your hope. The writer [of this book] said: I made up a poem on this theme:

1. He who desires to carry out all his aspirations should use his nights as camel on his road to reach them.
2. Diminish your food in order to maintain a vigil if you wish, O my friend, to attain perfection.

And it is said: He who keeps watch at night will rejoice in his heart during the day.

In the search for knowledge it behooves one to persevere in study and repetition both at the beginning of the night and at

47. al-Mutanabbī, d. 965, one of the outstanding Arabic poets. In the edition by F. Dieterici (Berlin, 1861), 255, 16, p. 677.

its end. For verily the time between dusk and the hour of dawn is a blessed time. On this subject verses have been composed:

1. O student of knowledge, occupy yourself with reverence for God, avoid sleep and leave off satisfying your hunger;
2. And persevere in study. Do not cease from this for learning exists and grows through study.

[And in the quest for learning] one must make use of the days of early youth and adolescence. And it is said:

1. By the amount of work [you do] you will obtain what you strive for. So he who strives for a goal stays up by night.
2. Make use of the days of early youth for verily the period of youth does not remain with you.

But [in order to pursue knowledge] one should not exhaust nor weaken oneself so that one cuts oneself off from work. On the contrary, one should practice temperance in this respect for moderation is one great source of all success. The Messenger of God said: "Indeed, this religion of mine is solidly grounded, so enter into it with moderation." Do not make hateful to yourself the service of God. Verily, he who makes plants grow does not cut up the ground nor does he neglect it entirely. The Prophet also said: "Your mind is your riding-beast, hence use it with moderation."

It is obligatory in seeking knowledge to have the highest aspiration level for learning since verily man flies by his aspirations like the bird flies with his wings.

Abū 'ġ-Ṭayyib [al-Mutanabbī]⁴⁸ said:

1. Decisions are arrived at according to the statute of those who decide, generous deeds according to the openhandedness of the generous.
2. And small things are great in the eyes of the small person and great things are small in the eyes of the great.

Aids to the acquisition of anything are industriousness and an ambition that aims high. He who aspires to memorizing all of the books of Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan and adds [to this ambition] industriousness and perseverance, will clearly remember

48. Ed. Dieterici, 226, 1, 2, p. 548.

the greater part of these books or at least a half. But if one has the most extreme aspiration but does not have industriousness, or has industriousness but does not aspire high, knowledge comes to one only in a small amount.

The venerable Imām, the most glorious Professor, Raḡī ad-Dīn an-Naisābūrī⁴⁹ recalled in the book *Makārim al-aḥlāq* [Ethics] that when Dū 'l-Qarnain [Alexander the Great] wished to make an expedition in order to become master of the East and the West, he consulted learned men and asked: "Why do I make an expedition for such an amount of empire? For verily, the world is small and perishable and rule of the world is a contemptible affair. So this [expedition] is not a noble way to exert oneself." But the learned men said: "Make the expedition in order that you may have possession of the present and the future world." So he said: "This is good." And the Messenger of God said: "Surely, God, the Exalted One, loves noble undertakings and abhors contemptible ones."

It is said:

Do not make haste in your affairs but proceed slowly with them. For nothing will straighten your stick like a slow fire.

It is reported that Abū Ḥanīfa said to Abū Yūsuf⁵⁰: "You were a hick but assiduity in your studies made you emerge [from your ignorance]. But beware of laziness, for, verily, it is inpropitious and a great calamity." The venerable Imām Abū Naṣr aṣ-Ṣaffār al-Anṣārī^{50a} stated:

1. O my soul, my soul, do not become lax in your work of piety and justice and good works [carried on] in calmness.
2. For each one who does good deeds experiences happiness while each one who acts in a lazy manner has afflictions and unhappiness.

The writer [of this book] said: There came to me a poem in the same vein:

49. Raḡī ad-Dīn an-Naisābūrī, d. 1149; cf. Brockelmann, *GAL*, Suppl., I, 641, where the title is listed, too.

50. Abū Yūsuf Ya'qūb al-Anṣārī, student of Abū Ḥanīfa, Chief Judge of Baghdad, d. 798.

50a. Unidentified.